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ABSTRACT

Characteristics of entering freshmen at the University of South Carolina (USC) Columbia campus are compared for 1975, 1980, and 1985. For each year, over 2,000 students completed a questionnaire prepared by the American Council on Education. National norms for public universities are provided for 1985, along with comparative data for the 1985 class by race (black/white). Student responses are presented as percentages for the following: sex; age; race; level of concern about financing college studies; educational background of father and mother (college degree); high school average of "A" or "B"; highest academic degree intended at any institution (bachelor's or post-baccalaureate); estimated parental income of more than $30,000; reasons for attending college (money, job, general education); reasons for choosing USC (e.g., tuition, academic reputation); objectives considered to be very important (develop meaningful philosophy, obtain peer recognition); met or exceeded years of study (for six subjects); relgious preference (Baptist, Catholic, none); political views (liberal or conservative); probable major field of study (education, business, computer science); and estimates concerning educational and social status (e.g., get married while in college). (SW)

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COMPARISON OF USC ENTERING FRESHMEN 1975 TO 1985

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The University of South Carolina--Columbia has been participating in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program of the American Council on Education since 1966. Data are collected annually during the orientation process and used to develop a profile of the entering freshman class. In addition, national normative data are also available. The following report offers a comparison of USC entering freshmen for the years 1975, 1980, and 1985. Comparative data are available for the 1985 class by race. Finally, 1985 national norms for public universities are shown to provide a national perspective. All data in the accompanying table are reported as a percentage of students agreeing with each item.

COMPARISON OF USC ENTERING FRESHMEN
1975 - 1985

Variable	USC 1975	USC 1980	USC 1985	USC Black	USC White	Nat'l Norms '85
	N=2293	N=2166	N=2476	N=342	N=2073	
SEX						
Male	51.9	47.5	48.1	32.7	50.3	50.1
Female	48.1	52.5	51.9	67.3	49.7	49.9
AGE						
17 years of age/younger	7.3	4.3	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.5
19 years of age/older	19.2	20.2	17.8	14.7	18.2	20.4
RACE						
White	88.8	85.3	83.8	----	83.8	90.9
Black	10.7	13.4	13.8	13.8	----	5.1
Do you have any concern about your ability to finance your education?						
Some/Major	55.2	62.7	56.4	82.5	51.8	62.4
Parents completing college degree						
Father	40.6	45.6	49.7	24.5	53.7	52.4
Mother	25.7	30.2	36.4	25.9	38.1	36.5
Average grade in high school						
"A"	15.3	19.4	18.7	20.0	18.5	30.2
"B"	64.1	61.4	64.4	65.5	64.2	59.1
Highest academic degree intended anywhere						
Bachelor's	39.8	36.1	35.1	22.7	37.4	36.3
Post-baccalaureate	53.8	60.5	63.2	75.7	60.9	61.9
Estimated Parental Income						
More than $30,000	19.2	43.7	70.4	36.1	76.2	71.3
Reasons for attending college						
Make more money	----	71.5	78.3	82.9	77.7	70.3
Get a better job	----	80.8	84.3	90.0	83.5	82.5
Get a good general education	----	74.0	66.6	70.4	66.0	61.9
Reasons for choosing USC						
Relatives wanted them to	10.7	6.3	5.9	6.8	5.7	5.2
Low Tuition	22.4	10.5	11.2	15.6	10.4	21.6
Good academic reputation	41.5	47.5	54.1	75.5	50.6	62.4
Objectives considered to be very important						
Develop meaningful philosophy	67.4	53.5	45.8	57.6	43.5	45.1
Obtain peer recognition	50.5	61.7	66.1	68.9	65.5	60.0
Be well off financially	56.6	71.2	79.1	86.2	77.7	72.3
Met or exceeded years of study in:						
Foreign Language (2 units)	----	----	75.8	66.9	77.1	77.2
History or Amer. Govt. (1 unit)	----	----	98.6	97.1	98.9	99.3
Math (3 units)	----	----	96.5	96.1	96.5	93.9
English (4 units)	----	----	98.5	98.4	98.4	95.5
Physical Science (2 units)	----	----	46.8	37.0	47.9	62.3
Biological Science (2 units)	-----	-----	34.0	30.9	34.2	37.7
Religious Preference						
Baptist	31.0	----	33.1	63.9	28.5	12.6
Catholic	13.2	13.9	16.3	3.2	17.9	33.1
None	7.8	5.1	5.5	1.3	6.0	10.5
Political Views						
Liberal	31.9	20.7	22.3	28.0	21.2	23.8
Conservative	16.6	21.8	22.2	12.0	24.0	22.0
Probable Major Field of Study						
Education*	9.5	5.6	2.8	1.2	3.0	4.4
Business	21.3	26.2	31.7	25.8	33.0	24.1
Computer Science	----	3.0	2.3	6.6	1.7	2.0
Students agree strongly/somewhat						
Wealthy should pay more taxes	72.1	66.6	69.6	81.3	67.6	72.1
Marijuana should be legalized	47.3	37.8	27.4	16.6	29.3	23.7
Death penalty should be abolished	----	26.3	22.3	40.6	19.1	24.6
Estimate chances are very good they will						
Be satisfied with college	54.5	59.5	56.5	54.5	57.2	57.4
Get married while in college	7.6	5.5	4.6	3.2	4.9	4.6
Get a bachelor's degree	71.7	66.9	64.7	66.0	64.2	78.4
Join a social fraternity or sorority	21.8	27.6	30.5	28.3	31.2	24.5

Conclusions

The preceding data permit at least three different types of analyses which will be highlighted below.

A. USC Freshman Changes 1975-1985

Since the beginning of the ten year period, there has been an increase in the percentage of the freshman class which has been comprised of blacks and females; in fact, females now constitute a majority of the entering freshman class. Current students were much more likely to come from higher income families. Parents of 1985 students were more likely to have completed college degrees than were parents in 1975. Current students were somewhat more likely to have achieved an average grade of "A" in high school than were 1975 students. Current students were more likely to attend college to make more money and to get a better job than they were in 1980; however, current students were less likely to attend college to get a good general education. Current students were also much more likely to support the objective of being well off financially and were less likely to be concerned about developing a meaningful philosophy of life. Students entering in 1985 were more likely to be attracted to the University for its good academic reputation. Current students are equally likely to express a liberal or conservative political view whereas 1975 freshman were twice as likely to express a liberal one. Current students were more likely to be pursuing a business degree and less likely to be preparing for a teaching career. Students generally have become more conservative with regard to social issues and most expected to be satisfied with college. Finally, current students were less optimistic they would get a bachelor's degree while a greater percentage expected to join a social fraternity or sorority.

B. Comparison of 1985 USC Freshmen by Race

In comparison with entering white students, black freshmen were more apt to be female. In fact, two-thirds of all entering black students were female. In addition, black students were less apt to be 19 years of age or older, they were more apt to be concerned about their ability to meet their financial obligations, and their parents were less likely to have received college degrees. Black students were somewhat more likely than white students to have achieved an "A" average in high school and they were also more apt to be planning post-baccalaureate degrees. Black students were more likely than white students to express a desire to be well off financially; at the same time, they were also more likely to have a goal of developing a meaningful philosophy of life. In comparison with white students, black students were more apt to be Baptist, less likely to be Catholic, more apt to be of liberal political persuasion, and less likely to have a conservative political philosophy. Finally, black students were less likely than whites to plan to major in business but they were more likely to plan to major in computer science.

*These data may not accurately portray the percentage of students who planned careers in elementary and secondary teaching since such students in 1985 would not have been enrolled in the College of Education. A more accurate representation of the percentage of students planning teaching careers can be obtained from a portion of the study in which the students were asked to report on their "Probable Career Occupation." The combined percentages of those planning to teach at the elementary and secondary levels for 1975, 1980, and 1985 were 5.8%, 4.2%, and 2.5% respectively.

C. Comparison of USC Freshmen with 1985 National Norms

In comparison with the national public university norms, USC freshmen were more likely to be black and somewhat less likely to be concerned about financing their college education. A smaller percentage of fathers of USC freshmen had college degrees than the national norms; USC freshmen were also less likely to have earned "A" grades in high school. USC freshmen were somewhat more likely than students nationally to be attending college to make more money and get a better job. A lower percentage cited low cost and good academic reputation as their reasons for attending college. In comparison with national norms, USC students were more likely to express a desire to be well off financially. Students nationally took more laboratory science courses in high school and were less likely than USC students to have taken three years of math. In comparison with national norms, USC students were more likely to be Baptist and less likely to be Catholic. USC students were more likely than students nationally to be planning majors in business. Finally, USC students were less confident of obtaining a bachelor's degree and more likely to plan to join a social fraternity or sorority.

Prepared by Dr. Paul Fidler, Assistant Vice President, Career Center; Char Backman, Assistant Vice President, Student Affairs; and Vicki Sox, Admissions Counselor. Complete data are available in Dr. Fidler's Office.